

Major League System

Chapter 201 - 201: Fixtures Released (1)

"Ahhh man that was tough."

"Yeah, I thought we'd be given a short break before Nationals."

The sound of teens chattering amongst each other sounded out as they made their way back to the common room after a long practice. The smell of sweat and dirt filled their nostrils, a familiar scent to everyone by now.

Daichi had a faint smile on his face despite feeling a little fatigue. Now that he knew his brother had kept his end of the promise, he was more than motivated to compete well at Koshien this year.

The him of a couple months ago could not compare to who he was now. After figuring out his goals and aspirations, Daichi was no longer plagued with any apathy, nor was he distracted during games.

He had morphed into an integral part of an already stacked Osaka Toin roster.

"Hey guys hurry up, the game has already started!"

A voice came out from a dorm room, urging them to come watch.

"Hell no, I'm gonna go shower first." Daichi quipped, feeling as if his uniform was going to stick to him perpetually if he didn't remove it now.

Daichi had made some friends on the team in his 6 months in Osaka. Apart from Kouichi, he had another 4 or so close friends who gathered after practice to watch the pro games.

"Alright hurry up otherwise you'll miss it."

Since practice had gone a little later than usual, the game had already begun.

Around an hour later, Daichi walked into the room feeling fresher than ever.

"What did I miss?" He asked, taking a seat on the bottom bunk.

"Only the whole damn game!" Jing responded, feeling a little irritated.

"Hey hey, we all know Daichi needs time to pamper himself."

"Yeah I heard he plucks his eyebrows in front of the mirror"

"Ahhh, is that why Kou-chan confessed to him? Does she like that style?"

Soon the four teens in the room were taking shots at Daichi, criticizing his long stints in the shower and letting their imaginations run wild.

Kouichi blinked a few times, looking at Daichi as if he'd only just met him.

"Do you really pluck your eyebrows?" He asked earnestly.

Daichi's eye twitched in irritation as he heard these words, his gaze focusing on the gullible Kouichi.

"HAHAHA."

The entire dorm broke into laughter, attracting the ire of the wide-shouldered youth.

"Alright, you asked for it." Daichi said, leaping over the bed and quickly going for a rear naked choke on the nearest perpetrator.

Yet this did nothing to stop the laughter that was echoing within the dorm room.

Kouichi still felt a little confused, but he turned to the TV just as the announcer started shouting.

"It's going... going... GONE! Nishinoya from the Warriors smashes a home run into deep right field. That's his 10th home run for the season."

The camera panned into the crowd where a tall boy stretched out his glove and easily collected the home run ball. He was wearing a Yokohama Warriors jersey and pants, looking out of place in the crowd.

"Eh... EH!? K-KEN??"

Kouichi shouted aloud, not expecting to see such a familiar face during a live broadcast of a professional game.

After hearing Kouichi's shout, everyone quickly turned to the TV, though none faster than Daichi. He quickly released the submission hold and turned his attention to the screen.

He saw Ken's tall figure holding up the home run ball with a smiling expression. Before sitting down, he handed the ball to a woman next to him who was wearing a cute white sun dress with yellow flowers on it.

Daichi gawked as he saw the two on the screen. Having not seen his brother for almost 6 months, he felt as if he was looking at a completely different person. Yet he instinctively knew it was him.

If that wasn't enough, he could see his mother and father seated on Ken's right side. They looked happy, filling him with warmth.

"Who is Ken?" Jing asked in puzzlement.

Seeing as both Kouichi and Daichi recognized the guy, the others were also curious.

"He's my brother." Daichi said with a warm smile.

"Eh!? You two look nothing alike."

"Adopted brother..." He clarified.

"He also played on the same team as us in middle school." Kouichi said, before adding, "He was also the Ace until our final year."

"Ahhh, so he mustn't have been that good then." One of the teens said matter-of-factly.

Kouichi paled at these words, looking at Daichi's reaction. Whenever he had brought up Ken previously, Daichi's mood plummeted. He was a little anxious as to how he'd react after someone said such a thing.

"He was injured, so he took a year off pitching." Daichi said, not going into too much detail.

"But he's still a great player. Him and my father taught me everything I knew about baseball before I came here."

A few of the others didn't seem satisfied with such a remark, yet no one said anything. They were emotionally intelligent enough to know not to badmouth someone's brother.

However, there was always one person...

"I mean, he can't be that great right? You were on the same team yet only you and Kouichi received scholarships." Jing said, shrugging his shoulders.

The others in the room didn't speak out against this, since it was also their true feelings.

Yet a wicked grin formed on Daichi's face in response. He thought it was funny that these guys who hadn't even made the first team would be looking down upon someone like his brother who had worked his way through to Nationals.

"I guess you guys will just have to wait until we face them at Koshien to see if he's any good or not." He puffed out his chest with pride, peaking at their changes in expression.

"Huh? He made it to Nationals?"

Even Kouichi seemed surprised at the news, his face brightening. In reality, he had a high opinion of Ken who had been nothing but supportive towards him, even after he took the Ace spot away.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 202 - 202: Fixtures Released (2)

If none of that had happened, Kouichi knew that he would never have gotten a chance to come to Osaka Toin. There was even a chance that he might not have played baseball in High School.

Daichi felt vindicated after seeing the changes in attitude from his friends. There was nothing the feeling of showing off one's family members.

"So why aren't you at this game Daichi?" Jing asked, breaking through the atmosphere.

"Ahhh... I guess they thought I was busy." He said, letting out an awkward laugh.

He turned back to the TV which had already gone back to the game and felt a sudden burst of jealousy. However, he quickly shook his head and threw it to the back of his mind.

His father had only just arrived in Japan that morning, there was no way he'd forgotten about him.

However, despite telling himself this, he still felt a nagging sensation inside. Perhaps it was the fact he hadn't seen his family for a long time, or maybe it was because he was just tired.

Either way, he decided to excuse himself after a few minutes and went to get some dinner. Since the cafeteria served food from 7pm to 8pm, he was a little early, but he waited patiently inside by himself.

BUZZ BUZZ

"Hey Kiddo, what are you up to tomorrow?"

Daichi's face bloomed into a smile as he saw the mail from his father. Whatever insecurities had been eating away at him suddenly dissipated in that moment.

The sound of cicadas chirping filled the air, accompanied by the sweltering heat of the Japanese summer sun. Despite now being early August, Autumn still seemed so far away.

It was currently a few weeks into Summer break. But while most kids were enjoying themselves and staying cool inside or at the local swimming pools, there were some who were relentlessly training.

"YOKOHAMA"

"FIGHT ON"

The dull sound of cleats hitting the ground mixed in with the heavy breathing of 20 or so teens rang out across the baseball field. At the forefront of the group, a tall and handsome figure took the lead.

He had brown hair and a chiseled jaw, sporting some foreign features that one wouldn't usually see in a Japanese native. Out of all the youths he seemed to be having the easiest time.

FWEEE

A whistle sounded, causing a groan of appreciation to be echoed in response. The group made their way over to the center of the field where a middle-aged man was waiting for them, his face covered in stubble and his intelligent eyes gazing at them.

"Well done you guys. I know it's hot and I know it's summer break, but you've done well to keep up your fitness all this time." Seiji Hanada announced, looking at his team with a sense of pride.

The second and third years began to notice a slight change within the coach this season. His feelings which were usually hidden behind his patented poker face seemed to be more prevalent this year.

Of course they were experiencing a successful season so far, but that didn't seem to be it. There was something or someone that had brought him out of his shell this year.

If someone were to ask any of the players who they were influenced most by this season, there would only be 1 unanimous answer.

Ken Takagi.

Right from the beginning, he had led by example like a true leader. Slowly bringing the team closer together, elevating the expectations they placed on themselves and molding their perceptions to mirror his own values.

Only through hard work and perseverance could one fulfill their own potential.

Coach Hanada glanced at the tall teen in front of him and could only nod in appreciation.

Unaware of the coach's thoughts, Ken placed his hand up as if to ask a question.

"Ah, no need to raise your hand Ken. You're free to talk." Seiji replied, letting out a small laugh.

"Coach, you said you were going to tell us about the draw for Nationals today."

"Ah yes, I completely forgot." He stated, placing his palm to his face.

Not wanting to keep the team waiting any longer, the coach spoke up, "Makoto and I went to the draw yesterday and already have the fixtures. They are on the notice board in the locker room."

"Now before you go loo—"

Before Coach Hanada could finish what he was about to say, there was pandemonium on the field as the group of teens sprinted towards the locker room. Even the ones who were trying to catch their breath moments ago, pushed through their exhaustion to stay with the pack.

"Ah, I should have expected as much." Seiji said, letting out a hollow chuckle.

As he turned his head and began to follow the youths, he bent down and collected the figure who had been run into the ground by the stampede earlier. With practiced ease, he set the short guy on his feet and dusted him off.

"Run along now and go have a look." He said, almost as if talking to a child.

Shiro had no tears to cry as he ran towards the locker room after being abandoned by his teammates. He almost looked like a lost child.

The team packed into the locker room and inched closer to the noticeboard. Since Makoto was already aware of the fixtures, he haughtily sat upon the bench and let the others find out for themselves.

Ken with his superior height was able to view it easier than the rest. He instantly found Yokohama's name in the bottom left corner of the page.

'We're facing... Shinjuku High.'

Those two words caused his body to seize slightly upon reading them. His mind instantly had flashbacks of his previous life when they were made to look like incompetent fools against such a team.

'Tatsuo Shiraki, Kei Hama... It won't be the same result this time.'

He clenched his fist, feeling a burning will to show how much he'd improved.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 203 - 203: Surprise Visitor (1)

Ken returned home later that afternoon and was surprised to see another pair of shoes at the door. At first he was confused, but then his face morphed into one of adulation.

Without another word, he kicked off his shoes and dropped his bag before running inside. He saw 3 figures sat at the table, his mother, father and a baby-faced teen with wide shoulders.

"Daichi!"

"Hey big bro" Daichi replied, a cheeky grin appearing on his face as he got up from the table. He'd purposefully kept his visit a secret from Ken, hoping to surprise him.

Without another word, Ken was about to embrace his best friend, however he was stopped by the outstretched arm of Daichi.

"Man you stink, go shower first." He stated, holding his nose with some exaggeration.

However, Ken wasn't having any of that.

'I'll show you how much I've improved.'

Without a word, he pushed forward and wrapped his long arms around the teen, using all of his strength to wrestle him. Having been taken off guard, Daichi was instantly put into a disadvantageous position.

He felt the damp uniform of Ken now flush up against his face, making his nose and eyes sting in response from the smell.

"D-Damn it!"

Daichi exploded forth with a crazy burst of strength that almost sent Ken flying into the opposite wall. It was only thanks to his long limbs that he was able to withstand the onslaught.

Ken could feel his brother struggling and felt his grip begin to loosen little by little. He instinctively knew that he was about to be on the receiving end of some punishment once Daichi got loose.

'Ah crap.'

Unbeknownst to Ken, Daichi had turned into somewhat of a neat freak since he'd been away from the house. He was often feared by his dorm mates for how aggressive he could be when things were left untidy.

Perhaps it was because he was forced to maintain the house when he was living with his mother, but he could not stand squalor or germs for that matter.

Of course none of this had shown while he was living at home, mainly because Yuki was so good at maintaining the house. She often performed spring cleans, getting busy with the duster.

Ken felt his grip suddenly break, releasing the bucking bull that he was restraining. Without wasting a moment, Daichi lowered his head and charged at Ken, tackling him onto the ground and creating a thud.

Yuki was about to step in, however Chris motioned for her to let them continue. He had a bright smile on his face, clearly enjoying the sibling rivalry going on in that moment.

"HA Ah, no... stop, STOP!" Ken was suddenly assaulted by a round of tickling while his brother sat on top of him. No matter how he tried to move, the figure on top of him felt as if he weighed a ton.

Just as he was about to cry out in defeat, he heard the deep and amused tone of his father from the kitchen.

"Alright you two, that's enough."

Daichi got one last jab in with his fist, punching Ken in the abs before he stood up. His hair was disheveled and his face red, but he still held out a hand to his brother on the ground.

He was actually impressed with his brother's strength. It had taken him all his might to break out of the vice grip from Ken, and when he punched him earlier he felt as if he'd punched a brick wall.

Ken on the other hand was feeling gloomy. Despite increasing his attributes all this time, he still lost to his little brother.

'I can't let him plonk his fat ass on me next time.' Ken thought, sending a dubious look Daichi's way.

He still accepted the hand and was promptly pulled up. Before he could let go, Daichi pulled him into a tight embrace and patted him on the back a few times.

"I missed you big bro." His words were soft, yet Ken could hear the sincerity in his tone.

His expression softened as he reciprocated the gesture. "Missed you too buddy."

Yuki felt her eyes moisten as she watched the scene, her bottom lip quivering uncontrollably. Before the waterworks came, she quickly turned around and focused her attention onto the stove.

"Hehe, I thought we could have a family dinner before Nationals start at the end of this week." Chris said.

He was actually happier than Yuki that his two boys were both home in this moment. He was carrying a lot of guilt for missing out on a lot of important moments for the two.

Chris had already resolved to watch the boys play on the biggest stage for High School Baseball.

At the mention of Nationals, the two boys stepped back and looked towards their father.

"Thanks Dad."

Chris got up from his chair and moved forward to hug his two boys, only for his nose to twitch in agony.

"Ah damn Kenny, you stink. And now so do you Daichi." He held his nose, feeling the earlier moment of familial closeness dissipate.

At these words, both Daichi and Ken looked at each other a faint grin appearing on their lips. The two nodded before springing into action.

With Daichi taking the left flank, Ken took the right side. With perfect synchronization, they managed to latch onto their father and hug him tightly, sharing the delicious scent of old sweat and cheap deodorant.

"H-Hey you two!"

Not expecting such a sudden attack, Chris called out in surprise. However he was laughing heartily in the next moment.

A few moments later, he motioned to his sons and gestured towards Yuki who still had her back turned to them. With a sneaking motion, he inched closer towards her, intending to strike.

"Don't. You. Dare."

Suddenly the atmosphere seemed to thicken, as if a powerful being had descended onto the mortal plain. All three men felt as if a gargantuan weight was assaulting their bodies, keeping them in place.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 204 - 204: Surprise Visitor (2)

'T-This is fear.'

Ken felt his heart pumping furiously as he was met with such resistance.

After what felt like an eternity, the pressure gradually receded, allowing the three to breathe normally once more.

Chris was the first to break the silence, talking loud enough that his wife could easily hear him.

"How about we all go to the public bath together and give your mother some space?" He said, some of the fear still evident in his expression.

"Ah, sounds like a good idea dad."

"Great idea!"

The two replied, glancing at Yuki every now and then to make sure the same thing wouldn't happen again. However, after receiving no response, they quickly made themselves scarce.

Chris too looked as if he was walking on eggshells. He lowered his posture and whispered to the two boys, directing them to go grab a change of clothes and meet him outside.

A few minutes later, they were all out of the house, only now able to let out a sigh of relief. Daichi seemed to be the most confused out of the group, having never seen this side of Yuki.

Seeing the confused expression on his face, Ken decided to speak up.

"Mom can be really scary, as you just saw. As long as you stay on her good side, there's nothing to worry about." Ken assured Daichi, patting him on the back consolingly.

Chris nodded, a serious expression on his face.

"Your mother is sweet and has a lot of love to give, yet she can have quite the temper..."

"Did I tell you she knocked out Ai's dad with a single punch?" Ken said, keeping his voice hushed.

"Eh!? One punch?" Daichi was gobsmacked.

"Pfft, that's nothing." Chris intoned, wagging his finger.

"I once saw your mother take out 6 delinquents at once when we were dating in University."

Both Daichi and Ken gasped dramatically, their imaginations running wild.

CREAK

The three almost jumped a meter high after they heard the front door swing open. They spun around only to see Yuki's face staring at them from the opening, a stiff smile on her expression.

"Hurry up. Dinner will be ready soon."

SLAM

Not even waiting for a response, the door was slammed shut, leaving the 3 guys to shudder.

"How about we leave now?" Ken suggested.

"I agree."

"Agreed."

With that, the trio made their way to the local public bathhouse, not even daring to look back at the house.

They returned an hour or so later, freshly clean.

Thankfully, Yuki seemed to have returned to her previous loving self, as if everything that had happened was merely an illusion.

Dinner was Pork Katsu with various side dishes. It was clear that Yuki had gone all out for this meal, not knowing when the next time everyone would be present in the house.

As they tucked into their food, there was a silence that overcame the table. Yet it wasn't awkward, it was actually the opposite. Everyone enjoyed their meal, happy just to be in each others presence.

Ken was actually the one who spoke up next, asking how long Daichi was planning on staying.

A wry smile appeared on Daichi's face as he answered the question, "Probably just the next two nights. It was hard enough getting this much time off considering Nationals is about to start."

Ken nodded. While the time was short, he could understand the coach's worries. If Daichi wasn't on the first squad it probably wouldn't have mattered much, but he was the starting catcher.

"Well I'll be at training in the morning, but I'll be free in the afternoon. How about we hang out then?" Ken suggested.

"Oh, you don't want to invite me to training then?" Daichi asked, letting out a hollow chuckle.

"Ha ha. I think our coach would have a hernia if a potential opponent joined our training." After saying so, he took another few mouthfuls of rice.

Daichi laughed in response. His coach would also probably suffer the same fate, if not worse.

"Speaking of which, we won't face each other until the semi-finals if we both win our first few rounds."

"Oh? That kind of sucks. I was hoping you'd be in different groups." Chris said, feeling a little disappointed.

Yuki spoke up this time, "Let's just be happy that you both will have a chance to compete with each other like you promised last year."

At the mention of their promise, both Ken and Daichi smiled. They had come a long way from the beginning of this year. Once they decided to go to different schools, there was only one way they'd be able to play each other in an organized tournament.

Making it to Nationals.

In essence, they had completed the hardest part and now only needed to win a few more matches each in order to fulfill their promise.

Suddenly, it didn't seem so far out of reach.

The two locked gazes and could feel a shared determination between themselves. Despite not verbalizing it, they could hear the three words burning from within.

'I won't lose.'

The rest of the dinner went by filled with jokes and laughter, filling the once quiet house with a sense of warmth and togetherness.

The one most affected by this was Yuki, whose face was beginning to hurt from the constant smile she was wearing. However, there was a bittersweet sensation in the back of her throat, knowing that this was only temporary.

Chris who knew his wife more than any other, felt her sorrow beneath the surface. He placed his hand on hers, sending a wordless comfort her way in the only way he could in this moment.

Yet inwardly, he knew that something needed to change. He had another month or so to think things over before he was due to fly back to America for another 3 months.

After dinner, Chris helped with the washing up while Daichi and Ken continued to catch up at the table.

DING

[SYSTEM REBOOTING]

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 205 - 205: Upgrade Complete (1)

The two didn't finish talking until it was already late. Just like old times they caught up and talked about everything under the sun.

Yuki had left Daichi's room untouched besides the routine cleaning she performed on the weekends. Therefore once they were done, the two retreated to their own rooms for the night.

Ken laid in bed and smiled, feeling a sense of calm and happiness he hadn't felt in quite some time.

During his conversation with his brother, he'd heard a notification from the system, meaning it was finally reactivated after 72 hours of downtime.

Without waiting any longer, he opened up the familiar system window and read the notifications.

[SYSTEM REBOOTING]

[...SYSTEM UPGRADE INSTALLING...]

[SUCCESS]

[HAS BEEN UPGRADED TO LEVEL 4.]

[You have consumed: S-grade Physicality Elixir.]

[Balance and Coordination grade has been increased by 1!]

[Agility grade has been increased by 2!]

[Strength grade has been increased by 2!]

[Stamina grade has been increased by 1!]

[Congratulations, user has broken through to S Grade Agility]

[Received: 5000 Major points. Quick first step skill has evolved into: Takeoff]

[Takeoff: Increase Agility by 2 grades when running 1 base.]

[Congratulations, user has broken through to S Grade Strength]

[Received: 5000 Major points. Power Hitter skill has evolved into: Slugger]

[Slugger: Increase strength by 4 grades when the ball is struck with the middle of the bat]

Ken looked at the wall of text in front of him, his expression lighting up. He had received an increase of 6 grades thanks to 1 Elixir, now propelling him into the S-tier for all of his physical abilities.

Not only this, he'd received 10,000 Major points and a couple of skill upgrades. Feeling like a kid at a candy store, Ken opened up his status window with an expectant expression.

SYSTEM LEVEL: 4 (14180/100,000 Major points to level up)

NAME: Ken Takagi

AGE: 16

TALENT ASSESSMENT: S

POTENTIAL: SS+

MAJOR POINTS: 14180

USER MENU:

-STATS

-MISSIONS

-SYSTEM SHOP

-LOTTERY (Locked)

-IMAGE TRAINING

-IDENTIFY

-TRAINING PLAN

USER STATS:

>Physical Fitness: S+

>Pitching: S-

>Fielding: B-

>Game Intelligence: B-

>Mental: A+

>Skills: 19

PHYSICAL FITNESS: (Avg. S+)

Balance and Coordination: S+

Agility: S

Strength: S

Stamina: S+

Ken checked out the new system window and couldn't help but notice that there were no obvious changes. A frown formed onto his face in response, showing a bit of disappointment.

Every time he'd upgraded the system he'd been giving another function, or some form of upgrade. Since this last one had cost 10,000 Major points, he'd expected something great in return.

'Is that it? Did nothing change?'

[Answer: System has been upgraded to include an Artificial Intelligence to help user make the most of its functions and abilities.]

Ken jumped out of bed in fright after hearing the monotonous female voice ring out in his head. Thankfully he was mindful enough to not let out a scream in response.

'W-What? AI?'

[Answer: Yes. AI.]

Ken was silent for a moment, as if he was trying to process what was happening. His expression changed once again after realizing that he hadn't spoken his question aloud.

'Y-You can read my mind?'

[Answer: Yes]

The cold and unfeeling voice of the system AI made him shiver for some reason.

For the longest time, the system felt like an accessory. While it was great to have, he never thought of it as a companion, or even having sentience, more like a tool to assist him in achieving his goals.

Yet now the fact that it could talk to him, even possessing the ability to read his mind, caused his anxiety to peak.

[Do not worry user. My existence is but a tool to assist you in utilizing the system.]

Ken jumped once more in response. Hearing the cold and unfeeling voice try to console him was such a weird situation that he did not know how to react.

However, he shook his head in the next moment. He would just need to accept the fact that this was the system upgrade that he'd been given and try to make the most out of it. There was no point in losing his cool now.

With that, he hopped back into bed and closed his eyes to gather his composure.

Only after a few minutes did he feel he had calmed down.

'AI what is your name?'

[Answer: I do not have one.]

Ken frowned.

'That will only make things more difficult in the future. How about we call you Mika from now on?'

[Answer: If you wish.]

Ken smiled. He had chosen the name Mika as a shortened version of Mikata which translated to Ally or Supporter in English. Not only did it fit the female voice, he already had an easier time accepting the AI after giving it a name.

'Okay Mika. First of all, you don't need to preface your answers with the word answer anymore.'

[Understood.]

'Secondly, what are your functions? What can you do to help me?'

[Mika can provide you with updates surrounding your bodies needs and requirements throughout the day. I can also assist in your training, ensuring that you receive the optimal output and gains with each session.]

Ken nodded in satisfaction. It sounded like he would have a personal trainer with him 24/7, making his life much easier.

[Mika can also answer some questions that the user may have regarding the system]

"Hmm?"

Without thinking about it, there was one question brought to the forefront of his mind.

'What is the system?'

[Mika cannot answer this.]

...

Ken frowned before asking another question.

'Was it the system that made me regress back in time?'

[Mika cannot answer this.]

"Argh damn it."

What was the point in asking questions when he wouldn't receive an answer.

After a bout of frustration, Ken tried to think logically. He probably wasn't asking the right questions. Plus, even if he found out the answers to these questions, what possible benefit could it bring him in this moment?

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 206 - 206: Upgrade Complete (2)

Suddenly feeling a bit better, he asked something else.

'What level of competition would you equate to S grade?'

As long as he could get a proper answer, he would be able to see how he compared in this moment.

[S Grading could be compared to those at the beginning stages of the Collegiate level.]

Ken's eyes widened before he nodded his head in understanding.

'Then what grading would you compare to the NPB?'

This was the real question that he wanted answered. It was his goal to go professional, which meant he needed to reach at least the level of those in the league.

[Mika cannot answer this as user has not discovered said grade.]

Despite not answering the question, Mika had given him plenty of information in that moment. Not only did she hint that there were grades above SSS, she also admitted that professionals likely within that range.

Ken let out a sigh of satisfaction, finally shedding some light on where he needed to be.

However, some things weren't exactly adding up. He had met players who had gone pro, yet only had a potential of SS or even S+.

Even Daichi who had the highest starting potential he'd seen at SSS+ turned out to be a great professional player.

'Mika, is it possible to increase your potential organically?'

The AI was silent for a while, as if she was picking her words carefully.

[It is possible to increase one's potential. However it requires the person to continually push the limits of their bodies and mental facilities.]

'Just as I suspected...' Ken thought inwardly.

After seeing the increase in Hiroki and Shiro's potential, he had theorized the very same possibility. Yet now that he had heard the words directly from Mika's... voice. He now believed it.

As Ken's mind was thinking about certain possibilities, he was interrupted by the monotonous voice of his new friend.

[Mika recommends user get some sleep in order to effectively recuperate.]

'Ah, good idea.' Ken thought.

However, his mind was still active at this moment in time since he'd finally been given all this new information. He believed it was easier said than done.

Before he could roll over and try his best to sleep, he heard the AI's voice once more.

[Initiating sleep protocol... Stand by.]

These were the last words he heard before his consciousness slowly began to fade.

The next morning, Ken woke up feeling as if he had the best sleep of his life. He stretched generously, feeling his body cry out in bliss.

Not even a few moments later, he heard the sound of his alarm going off beside his bed. Yet unlike all the other times he woke up right before his alarm, he was in a great mood.

'Damn, if I can sleep like that every night I wouldn't complain.'

[Would user like to set up sleep protocol automatically?]

He heard the sound of Mika's voice enter his head, getting his attention.

'Ah not at this stage...' He replied mentally.

If he were to set it up automatically, he may find himself sleeping on the street if he ever decided to go out one night.

Creak~

Daichi popped his head into Ken's room and flashed him a grin after seeing he was already awake.

"You ready to go for a run?"

"Just like old times." Ken replied, letting out a chuckle.

Not long later, Ken and Daichi were about to head out the door, only to be stopped by Yuki.

"Can you guys pick up some bread from Naomi's bakery on your way back? Here is some money."

With one hand cradling her morning coffee and the other hand holding out a 10,000 Yen bill, Yuki seemed as if she'd just crawled out of bed.

"Sure thing mom."

After grabbing the money and putting their shoes on, the two quickly began their run, starting off with a light jog to get their muscles warm.

Ken couldn't wipe the grin off his face this morning, after finally getting to run again with his brother. It seemed so long ago that they last worked out together that he'd almost forgotten what it was like.

He increased the pace with Daichi easily staying with him all the way. Until he was interrupted.

[Mika recommends user increase his speed by 22% to enter an anaerobic state]

Ken already thought that he was running fast enough, but he didn't complain.

"I'm picking up the pace." He said to Daichi, before bursting forwards with more momentum.

"You won't beat me!" Daichi yelled out, catching up after some time.

Ken maintained his speed, feeling his muscles begin to fatigue after 20 minutes. He turned his head only to see Daichi struggling a little beside him.

By the time they'd completed the circuit, the two were drenched in sweat.

"Ah man, that was tough." Daichi said in between gasps of air.

Ken had wanted to say something cool, but he was too busy sucking in deep breaths in order to reply. He placed his hands on his head with his elbows out, trying to open up his lungs to gather more oxygen.

[Mika recommends stretching before user's muscles cool down.]

"Let's do some stretches." Ken managed to say after a few moments.

Inwardly he was rather impressed by Mika's suggestions. He'd been wanting to get the most out of his training, so her appearance was a timely boon.

The two completed their stretches for the next 10 minutes in the same park that they used to frequent until the beginning of this year. It was just like old times as they chatted happily together.

Ken already noticed that Daichi's body had filled out even more. His wide shoulders and thin waist was a sign that he'd been eating and working out diligently all this time.

After they were done he spoke up.

"Let's jog over to Ai's house to get that bread."

"Sure."

The two arrived in front of Ai's house and walked into the bakery, only to be greeted warmly by Naomi. Ken introduced his brother before asking for some bread with a smile.

While the two were interacting, a beautiful figure slowly walked down the stairs. She was dressed in a cute pink and white dress which contrasted with her deep blue eyes.

Once she saw the two, her expression lit up in surprise, adding to the allure of her beautiful features.

[Heightened blood pressure detected from the user, please cease whatever actions you are undertaking.]

'H-Huh!? What the hell are you talking about?'

[High levels of anger detected in the user. Suggestion to leave this place immediately]

'Shut up!'

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 207 - 207: To Koshien (1)

A little later that morning, Ken finally got some alone time on the train to have a serious discussion with his new ally Mika. While her updates were helpful while he was training, having her interrupt during everyday conversations was not.

Her monotonous voice ringing in his mind felt as if a satellite navigation unit was talking to him while driving.

'Mika... Can you please save your updates for when I'm alone, unless it's important.'

[Understood]

He wasn't quite sure, but it felt as if there was a hint of annoyance in her tone.

Ken shook his head thinking that he might have just been imagining things.

The next few days went by in a blur. Before he could fully enjoy his time with Daichi, they had to send him off back to Osaka, much to their dismay.

While it was only short, having everyone back at home for 2 days was enough to put the family at ease. Yuki was probably the most upset that Daichi had to return to Osaka, packing him a large bento to take with him.

Chris had decided to take some additional time off so he could watch his boys play at Koshien. Thankfully his bosses were understanding enough of his circumstances to allow it.

Thus the first day of Nationals was upon them.

Thanks to Mika's amazing sleep protocol, he had managed to get a full nights rest despite being overly excited for the following day's activities.

After completing a big stretch, the familiar sound of his alarm going off rang in his ears. Ken sprung off the bed and pressed the button before quickly getting dressed and heading downstairs.

His mother sitting at the dining table and cradling her coffee as usual, sitting beside his father.

Chris looked up from his newspaper and grinned, "Big day today, are you ready to go?"

Ken felt a mixture of nerves and excitement, but he nodded nonetheless. He had worked so hard for this moment and it was finally here.

"Yep, I'm all packed." He replied.

"Good, then let's not waste any time. The train will take 3 hours to get there."

With that, he got up and leaned forward to give his wife a kiss.

"We'll be back in 2 weeks at most honey."

Since it was a single elimination tournament, teams could either be staying in Osaka for a single day or upwards of 2 weeks.

Today would be the opening ceremony, followed by 3 games which began at 10:30am. As long as no games went into extra innings, they would usually wrap up before sundown.

In the days following, there would be 4 games played per day, right up until the semi-finals.

"Wish me luck mom." Ken said, giving Yuki a hug.

Though she wasn't usually functional this early in the morning, his mother still reciprocated the gesture, even giving him a kiss on the forehead for good luck.

"I'll be watching you on TV. Don't worry about winning or losing, just try your best okay?" She said with concern.

"I'll win and try my best okay?" He said with a grin.

"Hahaha, that's my boy." Chris chimed in.

With that, the two left the house with their bags in tow.

At around 8am the duo finally arrived at Koshien, home of the Hanshin Tigers. Just seeing the outside of the stadium caused Ken to feel a tremendous pride flow through him.

This was the place where every High School player wanted to reach. The amount of tears shed by players due to being eliminated could probably fill the Shiroyama dam a few times over.

Yet here he was, on the doorstep of achieving what he'd been working so hard for.

As the two got closer to the stadium, Ken finally recognized some people in the distance.

"Coach!" Ken called out, waving his hand in the air.

Coach Hanada lifted his gaze and saw Ken's figure, waving in response with a smile on his face. Only after they got a little closer did he recognize the tall guy who was walking alongside him.

"Chris?"

Ken's father blinked a few times, as if not recognizing the man for a moment.

"Ah Seiji! So you're the coach my son has been praising all this time." He said, holding his hand out for a handshake.

Ken's eye twitched a little. He had told his father a long time ago that his old colleague was their coach, but it seemed that his memory had been compromised with age and his new position.

Seiji grasped the hand firmly and shook it with vigor. He had a lot of appreciation for Ken's father, especially since he'd also produced such a promising player for his team.

While the two caught up, Ken turned his attention to his teammates that were nearby.

Most of the team had already arrived, even the managers were present. He spotted Ai on the other side and was about to head over to say hello before he was ambushed.

"Our Ace finally decided to show up eh?" Hiroki said with a grin, nudging him in the ribs.

"I was getting a little worried over here." Makoto added, yet no one believed his words. He seemed too busy doing push ups to care.

A few of the others came forward and greeted him. He could feel that the atmosphere was full of excitement with an undertone of nerves which was perfectly normal.

"Where is Yuta and Tatsuya?" Ken asked with an odd expression.

Since he'd seen Jun a little earlier it meant that Tatsuya wouldn't be too far away. Yuta was also a very prompt individual, so it was odd not to see him around.

"Hehehe, look over there." Yusuke let out a mildly evil chuckle and pointed to a spot not far away.

Ken turned his gaze only to feel his eyes almost bulge out of their sockets.

Yuta who was usually the picture of a smiling devil currently looked like a little puppy as he followed around the large chested manager Yuko. One could almost make out an invisible leash that was tied around his neck.

"W-What happened!?"

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

